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"WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH GERMANY?"
S E R M O N
delivered by
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Last week, in one of my very infrequent trips to the movies, I came upon one of the type that you keep looking for, and find so very rarely. It was entitled "The Seventh Cross," and was much superior to what we have come to expect from the city that produces these movies. There is a story there that is not a propaganda story. It runs counter to everything that we are being flooded with. It is the story of a man, in Germany in pre-war days, in prison and concentration camp, with a deep, festering bitterness against all his fellowmen. Then he escapes to discover that people will risk their lives to help him; that here and there, Fellow-Germans, unknown to him, will risk their lives to save his. Thus he grows out of his bitterness into a glorious new experience.

There is one character in the story, a very quiet, insignificant, ordinary sort of a person who was his friend, and who took him in and helped him most. This fellow said to the escaped man concerning his reactions to nazism, "I don't do any thinking. You fellows are always worrying about something." He said, "I get so many Marks a month, and I know that we are eating regularly now; and that I am feeding and clothing my children. That's all that counts, isn't it?

Now, we know it isn't, but I am submitting to you that this is a picture of the average man, be he American or German. This chap was the one who first risked his life to help his friend, and in the risking, the Gestapo came and picked him up. He got out of it all right, but his wife wanted to know how it happened that they came for him, and he said, "Well, the landlady saw a visitor coming in yesterday, and she reported it." Naturally, his wife was intensely bitter toward this landlady. Then this perfectly wonderful, ordinary fellow quieted her by saying: "I wouldn't be too hard on her. A person has to know an awful lot these days to know what is right to do." This he said about the woman who almost caused his death and that of his family as well. "I wouldn't be too hard on her. In these days, a person has to know an awful lot to know what's right to do."

During the week, I thought that I should have changed the title of this sermon. Not, "What shall we do with Germany?" But "How shall we treat Germany?" Because you ought to know--you who have been following me here--and if you do not already, you shall soon learn that I rarely, if ever, deal in specifics. My work is to deal with principles, principles that underlie our problems; to deal with the basic issues, not to give you my ideas, but to bring you the light and wisdom of Mankind, which is to say of Religion on the problems that confront us. For me to give you specific solutions is to impose myself on you; and if I ever do, you must know it is a bad mistake, and has slipped by unconsciously. So I am not going to presume to tell you <u>what</u> to do with Germany. I am going to discuss <u>how</u> we should handle Germany, and that is my business.

There are a number of ways suggested. Oh, there are lots of them, and they run like this. Let us sterilize them, and annihilate them. They cause too much trouble in the world. Now let us finish them off in the way you would a hopelessly diseased tree, cut it down.

Isn't it interesting how things that you do not like and that you attack, almost always pull you down to their level? For instance, the Germans, in attacking the Jews because of their isolation and insularity, and because they thought themselves the chosen race, are thus committing the same crime for which they condemned the Jews.

In advancing the solution just suggested, we make the same mistake. What don't you want or like about the Germans? They are brutal, ruthless. They sterilize and kill off people they don't want. They are annihilating whole races. Let us do the same thing to them. Are we in any better moral position than they if we do the same things that they do?

Another plan is to dismember the State, and annex portions of their country. Let's give East Prussia to Poland, and let's take the Rhine and give it to France. Cut off Austria, and make it independent again. Give this to Czechoslovakia, and this to somebody else. Again, be it noted, this is the same sort of action for which we condemn the Germans. It is the same high-handed way, same ruthless manner in which they have treated other countries. I submit that whoever uses other people in that way, be they Germans or British or Americans, are on the same low level of spirit and morality.

A further suggestion is that we enslave them. We will bundle them up in the tens of thousands, and send them to Russia to rehabilitate the cities they destroyed. We will send them into France and Belgium to act as forced labor battalions. That's just what the Germans did with the people they conquered. They brought them back to Germany to work. From the standpoint of moral judgment, there is no difference.

From many sources there is coming the demand that the United Nations, (in this case we mean the British and Americans) should send in school teachers to teach in all the German schools so that the German children will grow up with our ideas and attitudes. Of course, we would not be willing to allow the Russians to do this with regard to Communism, but we are willing, if not eager, to impose our ideas. Unfortunately, it is always difficult to realize that others may be as suspicious of our ideas as we are of theirs. But worse than this is the method and procedure the Nazis adopted in order to sell their particular doctrines. We abhorred their action and condemned them for it. Now, in our attempt to do what is right we must be careful not to lay ourselves open to the same condemnation.

Another way is to treat the Germans as a sick nation, and so set ourselves the task of bringing them back into the community of nations. Curiously enough, there is less voice for this than for any other. It's the least popular.

What is the general way in which we should attack this problem? There are two chief approaches. One of them is the way of the three witches--the way of Fear, Hate, and Revenge. The other way is the way of the three angels, shall we say, Faith, Hope, and Love. I am submitting to you that the way of the three witches(remember that in fairy stories, witches always have a way of appealing to those they are about to destroy. They appear not as ugly crones, but as lovely, desirable creatures, and thus snare their victims.) will lead only to our destruction. They have never led to anything else. They are the three motivating forces in the lives of most of us. Just stop to think of the things you are afraid of. Afraid of ill health and afraid of death and afraid of the loss of your money. Afraid of being embarrassed. Afraid of being passed by other people. Afraid of being looked down on socially. You can name them for yourself. They are cancerous growths in your spirit.

I dare say that fear motivates more action than almost any other factor. And a fear always leads to hatred. You begin to hate your fellowmen because of the things that you fear at their hands. In its more refined modes--and this is not fantastic--you begin to hate yourself. I venture to say it would be

surprising how many of us hate ourselves. You wouldn't admit it, but a trained observer could tell you that that is what your actions mean: You hate yourself. Out of hatred, there always comes revenge. You are going to get back. You are going to prove yourself. You are going to make up for these things that have been done to you. You will show them! And out of that, in this war-time, there is coming the feeling that we must punish. We will punish these enemies. First, we feared them, and then hated, and now are at the point of wanting revenge on them. We are determined we are going to get it. You know when it is laid out baldly in front of you that it isn't right. Surely we have come far enough in our spiritual development to know that revenge and hatred are not right, furthermore, nothing that comes out of fear, hatred, and revenge is right!

Nevertheless, we are deciding that we will make these people suffer. Now, I shouldn't be saying these things, but I must. We will make the Germans suffer, and when you stop to think of it, it just doesn't add up. I know it's normal, and I know that most of us feel that way, but have we ever stopped for a moment to think how much they are suffering? I have yet to see in any newspaper, one mention of the nerve power and the resistant strength and the courage of the German people. Now, you can't write that in newspapers, and you are not supposed to preach it from pulpits, but isn't it right? And, if it is right, isn't is a factor to be considered earnestly and sincerely? If we have praised the British to the skies for what they withstood during the "blitz", has not this enemy of ours withstood a thousand times more? I am not examining it on any nationalistic basis, you realize, because in this Pulpit, there are no national boundaries. We have knocked them all down, and we are in the realm of the spirit. I am just saying that if we praise one of these two nations for the suffering it has been able to endure, then this other nation which has suffered more, by all the laws of logic, should be praised more, at least for this capacity, even though it be an enemy.

I think it is fair to say that no other nation has endured more distress, confusion, and suffering since the turn of the century than has this enemy of ours. Go over their history. They have been confused, bewildered, fear-ridden, and without peace or security of any kind. Regardless of whether or not they started the first World War think of the numbers of their young people who were lost, and the suffering that that conflict brought upon them. The end of the war brought no relief for then came the blockade when their children and old and young died of starvation because no food was available, and we as victors would allow none to be sent in. And then, the indignities we heaped upon them, which we Americans would not have taken, and will not take. And then the unemployment. Did we have it? They had it many times worse than we or any other nation. And after that the inflation! More starvation, more riots, more confusion, more pitiful helpless despair. And then along came the demon, Hitler. Of course they supported him. They would have supported anyone or anything that gave promise of restoring order, decency, strength, or hope. Would we or any other people have acted differently? Remember the power and support for Huey Long, gained in a wealthy, abundant country in a time or peace. I think we must admit that most of us are like the young father in the picture we have already mentioned. He didn't think much. He knew the suffering he had gone through, and he knew he didn't want any more of it. He grabbed at the first sign of salvation. Now, it was a wrong salvation. There can be no doubt of that. It was his destruction, and may be ours too, but he grabbed it. And he went on suffering.

When a child pulls down your most beautiful vase, and it falls on his head and gashes him severely, almost mortally, do you punish him by whipping him? There is only one way to solve such spiritual problems, be they personal or national. There is only one way, and it is the way of Faith, Hope, and Love.

It is true we must find some particular solution for the problem, but it doesn't much matter what that way is as long as it is in line with a sound principle. It may come to be annihilation and sterilization, I am using the extreme, but if that is the way of Love, then let's take it. You and the so-called experts will pick the way. I am simply saying that the way we choose must be directed, guided, and determined by the principle of Love. The love that reaches out to save, that says I hate the thing you have done, and I have fought it because I knew we couldn't exist as a family if you continued longer in the path you were taking. Now that I have made possible the opportunity of restoring that family, I am going to bring it about. Whatever I do will be done in the spirit of Love to achieve the State of Love, because that State, alone, is the State in which man can live. If we can rise to this level, we shall achieve justice in the highest and most developed sense of the word; and we shall bring about the reintegration of the Nations, and thus establish the only foundation upon which men may rear the structures of peace.

Now, why should we follow this principle? There are a great many reasons, but I shall suggest just one or two of them. Carry these through for yourselves. First of all, there is the historical reason. You remember, of course, that these are just my interpretations. To that extent, I give you my interpretation and understanding of the spiritual powers that are at work, and have been at work, and will be at work in this natural world of ours.

Take the historical argument, We have never done anything other than to humiliate and impoverish our destroyed enemy. As far back as you want to go, it has been the way in which man has acted. Has it ever stopped a war? We know it hasn't. We know from our studies, and they still hold good in this time of passion and extreme, that wars have been caused by wars, caused by the way we have handled them and conducted ourselves in victory. So you find the enemies of the Jewish people trying to exterminate them. They did everything they could, and now Hitler is back at them again, having learned nothing from history. And the Jewish people will go on and on almost because of the persecution and the attempt, just as the will of a people is strengthened by the bombardments they take from the air. Consider the Polish people. Remember, if you have studied it, some of the things that they have endured. Their Country has been wiped out for generations, and now it has gone again; and it will come back. These methods simply do not work. Every time it has been tried, the people who have been humiliated and impoverished and almost destroyed, have been the cause of another war. Because they are men they will not submit. There is too much in the human spirit for that.

In the Balkans throw Bulgaria against Hungary and Hungary against Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia against Rumania, and Rumania against Greece, and all of them against Turkey and Russia. You know it hasn't worked there. You know in the war of 1870, the humiliation the Germans imposed upon the French was one of the large factors leading to the war of 1914. Of course they wouldn't take it. You know too that the things we did to the Germans in 1918 have been at least a partial cause of this great war.

You can't make peace that way, but no nation has ever fought a war and not wanted to act this way when the war was over. You see, we are not yet very far out of the jungle. I have said that before. And when those animal passions get roused, they sweep away the higher reaches of the spirit. Perhaps we are yet too young and immature in spiritual matters to act in this way. But we can at least hope, and remembering our divinity, keep the vision in front of us.

There is another argument, and it is the pragmatic or the common--sense argument. This follows from the historical, because the lessons we read from

history are common-sense and pragmatic. But I mean it in this way. We have only to apply to the affairs of the Nations the kind of experience we have had as individuals. I know that when someone knocks down another man in a brawl, and he stoops and says, no matter how right he was, "I am sorry. Shall we be friends?" It doesn't always work, but as opposed to, "Now he's down there; step on his face," there is really no question of which is the most effective way of insuring continued or renewed good relations. You say you may not want to have good relationships. That doesn't hold any more, because in this closely knit world the nations must have relationships; and if they are not good, they will be bad.

Now, concerning such precise issues as dismemberment and annexation, destruction of industry, carting away of implements and tools, and such like, six different presidents of six different engineering societies in this country, have, on a purely practical basis, said that such treatment is utterly out of the question, because it is not practical.

There is one other pragmatic factor here, and it is not the least. However animal we may be, and however passionate we may become in these extremes, we are still human beings with the Spirit of God in us. And if we, in our calmer, better moments, will not support, then the peace will fail again, because we will have neither the patience nor the interest nor the will to enforce it. It has got to be the kind of peace that will continue to recommend itself to us as worthy of interest and support. It must be the type of peace about which we can say, "It is done in the spirit of Love, and it is done because it is right; and only what is right will work, and we will stay with it." Now, that will take wisdom, a lot of wisdom.

The third argument for this general method of solution that I have chosen is the cultural or humanitarian; and this is not unimportant. It follows from what I have said about the imposed relationships with people. You see, we are a family of nations, and we are even more interdependent than a family in the ordinary sense of the term. If someone leaves the family circle, he has another place to go. He may go on living in a different circle of friends. But, in the National scene, there is no place to go. We have reached the frontiers, and there is nothing beyond. No Nation can be excluded from the family of Nations, because there is no place to go. There go I. I am involved, inextricably involved. I belong to all men, and they belong to me. Even in a scientific report from the Brookings Institute, there was found this one line: "We either go up together or we go down together." If other nations go down, we will go down with them, because we are tied to them for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer. Mankind is one unit. Only now are we coming to see it. One unit. And we are all brothers because we are Children of God, and the same rain falls on them as falls on us. The same laws apply to them as apply to us. The same spirit holds there as holds here. We had better not hurt ourselves by hurting them. This rule is practical as well as humanitarian.

The fourth reason is the religious. Everything that I have been saying so far is religious, and I wondered about making a separate division for it. Yet there is a place, and the place is this. All these practical reasons are practical because they have been discovered and wrought out of the experience of man. They are not merely something that the idealists like. They are not "spiritual". They are practical because they are real; because they fit in with the laws of this Universe, and because <u>the</u> law of this Universe, the law of Life, is the law of Love; and that is God.

I am not suggesting that we adopt whatever happens to work. I am asking that we take this method because it is the method of God, and it will work. If it does not work now, it will work in the future, and I would rather be right and be a failure than wrong and a success. But, by this time, we have come to realize, as these other arguments show, that in this kind of question, you can't be wrong and be successful. God is both a principle of ultimate justification, and a practical rule of life. He will be Right, but He is Right now.

Now I am through, almost. You don't want to do this, do you? I flatter you. No, I don't. I honor you by discussing this with you, because I know that most congregations wouldn't discuss it. I wondered how many people would get up and leave. I saw two or three. You stayed, and that is your quality. It is a degradation to us that I should even take the time to praise it, a degradation to think that it is something unusual in a Church. Too long have ministers and churches been proclaiming in grand style: "We are going to stand unalterably for the things of God only," and then forgetting their principle under the pressure of circumstances as they turn around to echo the common prejudices of the day. I trust that will never be true of this church. I know you do not like this discussion. I know that in all likelihood the argument has not justified itself to you. But I know this--and here is the thing you have got to wrestle with if you would find and maintain your integrity--I know that what I have said is what you profess to believe. It is what all Christian people profess to believe. Then why, in the name of God, don't we act that way? You have been professing it for years. The Church has been professing it for centuries. Comes a time of strain and stress, and we go back, back into the mire of our prejudice and our animal nature. We can't go on doing that. We have got to begin to make a stand for the things we believe. We have got to begin to think enough about them and to work on them so that we don't lose them when the pressure is put on. Of course it is hard. Why shouldn't it be hard? Why should it be easy?

I know that this peace will not be made in this way. I know it. But we have got to go on talking about the way in which it should be done. We have got to go on thinking about what we ought to be. We have got to go on working toward the thing we should be, not luxuriating in what we are. Some day we will make our peaces this way, and then there will be no more war.

Listen to this from Russell Davenport's new, very fine poem:

It is no easy shore. Adventure yields
To mockery, which arms the prejudiced;
To wealth and all the power that wields;
To cynic, misanthrope, and atheist:
They will not know the Truth who cannot bear
The pain of Love, nor will their deeds persist,
Nor will their standard, lifted anywhere,
Protect the earth from bloody dreams of hate:
But only those with courage to prepare
The chamber of the heart will celebrate
The wedding-day of truth and liberty.
This is the needle's eye, the narrow gate,
That leads beyond the horizons that we see,
To what has never been, but yet will be.

Dreams are they, but ye cannot stay them
Or thrust the dawn back for one hour.
Truth, Love, Justice, if ye slay them
Return with more than earthly power.
Strive if ye will to seal the fountains
That send the spring through leaf and spray
Drive back the sun from the eastern mountains
Than bid this mightier movement stay.

It is the Dawn! the Dawn! The nations
From east to west have heard a cry
Through all earth's blood-red generations
By hate and slaughter climbed thus high
Here on this height still to aspire
One only path remains untrod.
One path of peace and love climbs higher.
Make straight that pathway for our God!